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051612Z Jan 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000063

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/03/2015

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SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY'S JAN. 3 MEETING WITH SPEAKER OF  
TURKISH PARLIAMENT ARINC

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric Edelman; reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary: The Deputy Secretary emphasized the importance of strong U.S.-Turkish consultations on a wide range of issues. In response to Speaker Arinc's emotional criticism of "100,000 deaths" in Iraq and the Fallujah operation, the Deputy Secretary pointed to the misuse of mosques by insurgents in Fallujah and questioned inappropriate statements about coalition efforts in Iraq. Arinc responded by underscoring the importance of bilateral relations and the need for the U.S. to trust Turkey as a strategic partner. End summary.

2. (C) The Deputy Secretary led off by noting an irony in U.S.-Turkish relations. While there is more reason than ever to consult, in the last several months neither side has done what is needed to consult or to give new vitality to the relationship. The U.S. desires increased consultations, whether on Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Cyprus, or a number of other issues.

3. (C) Arinc averred in response that the relationship, based on traditional ties and a strategic partnership, is stronger than ever, despite some "unpleasant incidents." The two sides know each other much better now. Aside from historical shared fate in Korea, NATO, Bosnia, etc., no one can deny the U.S. support for Turkey's EU avocation. Arinc himself unfailingly receives every Codel, every delegation at whatever level. Two years ago he received Speaker Hastert and telephoned him recently when Hastert was passing through Turkey.

4. (C) He, PM Erdogan, and FonMin Gul are the most sincere among all Turkish politicians in wanting to strengthen relations with the U.S., Arinc continued. From time to time Turkey's parliamentary decisions may differ from the desires of the Turkish government, but everyone must respect this element of democracy. For instance, in March 2003 the parliament rejected the GOT motion to allow deployment of U.S. troops through Turkey, but the decision didn't create bilateral problems. In any event, the operation went ahead and in the spirit of protecting Iraqi territorial integrity and supporting democracy and reconstruction, Turkey has opened its ports, airfields, and roads to the flow of supplies to Iraq.

5. (C) Iraq is a close neighbor, with strong ties of religion, Arinc declared. One should understand Turkey's intense interest and Turkey's great regret at the 100,000 (sic) deaths in Iraq since the operation started, especially the deaths and suffering of Muslim civilians. More than 70 Turkish truck drivers have been killed and security has not been achieved. Recently, five Turkish security personnel were killed on the way to Baghdad. While U.S. assistance in this incident is recognized, the Turkish public continues to make its concerns about the general situation known to MPs and it is impossible to remain indifferent to this pressure from the public.

6. (C) What makes the situation even more difficult were the pictures of the incidents in Fallujah's mosques, the pictures and film of suffering women and children in Fallujah, the pictures of American soldiers torturing prisoners at Abu Ghraib. It is impossible to remain insensitive to the sharp reactions among the Turkish public. While PM Erdogan, FonMin Gul and Arinc himself expressed their reactions in a way "not to hurt relations with the U.S." (sic), there have been cases of intemperate remarks, for instance the labelling of the Fallujah operation as genocide by parliamentary human rights committee chairman Elkatmis. This remark was a mistake, but we have to appreciate that sometimes people express what they feel.

7. (C) The Deputy Secretary answered that it is precisely because we value Turkey's and the Turkish parliament's views that he wanted to visit. The U.S. understands the pressure on Turkish MPs. The U.S. also wishes the same MPs had been so outspoken during all the years when Saddam was committing true genocide against his own people.

8. (C) Regarding Abu Ghraib, the actions of some American

soldiers stained our honor, the Deputy Secretary said. It's indeed upsetting for all of us to see pictures of destroyed mosques. But the misuse of mosques as arms depots and firing points is also a problem.

9. (C) Arinc responded defensively. My sensitivities are formed by what I see in the media, he said. The U.S. has carried out its operation in the name of peace, but "100,000 deaths" (sic) contradicts this stated aim. This is a sincere view, one I express as a friend, he asserted. We are all aware Saddam was a dictator. Elkatmis made a mistake, he expressed only his personal opinion, not that of the parliament or government. The U.S. should trust Turkey's friendship. Turkey cannot be underestimated. We are an honest country. We are the best partner for strategic cooperation. You should believe this.

10. (C) Turning to Iraqi elections, both Arinc and the Deputy Secretary agreed on the importance of holding the elections according to schedule. Arinc emphasized that the Sunni boycott is a wrong approach. Turkey is trying to convince the Sunnis to participate and Arinc noted his own lobbying efforts with Iraqi Sunnis in this regard.

11. (C) Rushing to get in the last word, Arinc then called for more border crossings between Turkey and Iraq. Turkey wants northern Iraq to be free of threats to Turkey, and is exasperated at having its views not taken into account. But in the end it is the Turkish-U.S. partnership that is important for solving regional problems, whether in Iraq or the Middle East in general. The Deputy Secretary responded that, concerning Turkey's security and northern Iraq, the U.S. would be sending a strong delegation to the Jan. 11 trilateral talks in Ankara to discuss how to eliminate the PKK threat.

12. (U) This cable was approved by the Deputy Secretary.  
EDELMAN